

**Appendix B - SFA Recruitment Letter**



Date

<<Name>>, <<Title>>  
<<School Food Authority>>  
<<Address>>  
<<City, State, Zip>>

Dear <<Name>>:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is working on identifying strategies to increase students' selection of reimbursable meals in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs while improving the accuracy of school food authority (SFA) claims for USDA reimbursement. FNS would like to partner with one or more schools in your SFA on a project to test some of these strategies.

FNS research finds that one of the most common program errors results from mistakes in identifying meals as reimbursable at the point of sale, referred to as "meal claiming" error. The overwhelming majority of meal claiming errors are "overclaims," when a non-reimbursable meal is recorded as reimbursable. FNS would like to work with SFAs in your State on easy to implement strategies to increase the percent of trays that meet the requirements for reimbursement. The goal is to take advantage of the fact that by simply increasing the percentage of students selecting reimbursable meals, meal claiming error will necessarily go down.

The project will test variations on familiar strategies including grab and go lines and/or school meal pre-ordering systems. Many schools already use these options to offer their students greater convenience, reduce cafeteria wait times, and to help with meal planning, among other reasons. Additionally, many SFA administrators recognize that these options can be designed to encourage students to select meals that meet the requirements for reimbursement. FNS's interest is in building on what schools are already doing in a way that does not increase burden to either the schools or the students and at the same time, increases program integrity.

FNS specifically designed this study to have minimal impact on the SFAs and schools that agree to work with us. Baseline data will be collected on the number of reimbursable meals served and the total number of meals served. We anticipate there will be very little burden associated with providing these data, since the number of reimbursable meals served is something that schools already collect and report. There may be some additional work required to obtain counts of the total meals served, but we anticipate that many schools will already have that information.

There may be an additional data collection component in schools that have electronic, pre-ordering apps. Data that comes from the pre-ordering software system will be need to be de-identified by the school

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According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0584-0524. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average one (1) hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services, Office of Policy Support, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 1014, Alexandria, VA 22302, ATTN: PRA (0584-0524). Do not return the completed form to this address.



prior to sending it to FNS, which will likely involve removing the student's name, ID number, and eligibility status, and replacing that information with a randomly assigned ID number. FNS will provide instructions to the schools concerning how to de-identify that data that is collected from the pre-ordering software system. All personally identifiable information, such as the student's name and eligibility status, will be removed from the data. A randomly assigned ID number will be used instead of the student's name.

The goal of this project is to test some of those design modifications and determine whether schools can take advantage of students' desire for convenience to increase reimbursable meal percentages and reduce meal claiming error. We are interested in working with your schools to build on ideas that many schools have already incorporated to help encourage students to select reimbursable meals and save them time in the cafeteria. The study options available include having schools establishing a dedicated "grab and go" line, using an existing electronic pre-ordering system, working with the school as it implements a pre-ordering system that is planned but not yet in use, using a paper-based pre-ordering system, or using a combination of grab and go and pre-ordering. FNS is willing to work with SFAs and schools in school year 2019-2020 and/or the following school year, depending on their availability.

FNS also hopes to test the feasibility of using a new methodology of data collection for studies that rely on recording the content of students' trays in a limited number of schools. Over the past several years, FNS studies that include meal observations have relied on data collectors to observe and record the names of individual food items on students' trays. The new method the study team would like to test will involve taking pictures of only the trays (there will be no pictures with people). At the end of the project, FNS will evaluate the pictures to determine if this is a viable method for collection information on the number of complete meals served in a given cafeteria line. Data collectors will be instructed and trained to only take pictures of the trays and to ensure that no students are included in the photographs, even in the background. FNS staff will review the photographs and will delete any that contain identifiable images of children from the data storage device.

Participation in this study is voluntary. The information that we collect from this study will be kept private to the full extent provided by law, as mandated by the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. §552a).

A member of the project team will follow up directly with your office to provide more information and to discuss whether schools in your SFA are candidates for participation. In the meantime, please feel free to contact the team if you have any questions:

USDA: (<<REGIONAL OFFICE CONTACT>>) or Edward Harper (FNS, Child Nutrition Programs), who may be reached at (703) 305-2340 or by e-mail at [Edward.Harper@fns.usda.gov](mailto:Edward.Harper@fns.usda.gov).

Your State's Child Nutrition Director, (<<CN DIRECTOR NAME>>), has already been contacted by the project team.

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OMB Number: 0584-0524  
Expiration Date: xx/xx/20xx

Thank you in advance for your help and cooperation. We look forward to working with you on this important project.

Sincerely,

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